

Engineering Service Learning

Akumadan, Ghana

Holly King College of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering



STEP
SECOND-YEAR TRANSFORMATIONAL
EXPERIENCE PROGRAM

My time spent in class and in Ghana was full of new ideas and experiences. The main takeaway that I gained from this project was that privileged people – engineers, humanitarians, really anyone in a developed nation - have failed to help developing countries help themselves. Rather, some situations have been made worse by our interference, although our intentions were good. I learned that sometimes what we think others need, they are doing very well without. We need to ask how we can help instead of assuming how we should.



Picture of a Ghanaian street side from a car window.



My project included a semester-long course and a two-week trip to Akumadan, Ghana. The class involved learning about Ghanaian culture, designing a latrine biogas prototype, and testing it. We studied past humanitarian efforts in order to best know how to implement our work in country. Our hope was that it would have a longest-lasting, positive result on the community we served.



Matt, Megan, me, and Kevin drinking fresh coconut water in a local market.

My trip to Ghana changed the way I view Western culture. I realized how great an affect it has on the world. Anyone who has access to technology is looking to America to know what is desirable, seeing our culture as the ultimate success and fulfillment, which I do not believe to be true. Most of the people I met in Ghana have life-long dreams to come to America. I understand this desire, but America is not the end all be all. My trip helped me appreciate where I am from, but to never idealize it.

O-H-I-O with our biogas generator.

Having the opportunity to learn about a different culture and to then experience it in the context of engineering work showed me how my studies could apply anywhere in the world. I hope to be able to work overseas as a chemical engineer at some point in my life. That idea is no longer as far fetched as it was.



Me playing drums with local at a market in Accra, the capital.

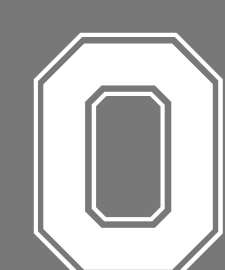


The Latrine Team delivering our project.

My favorite part of going to Ghana was making friends with the local people. It was fun to be able to relate to them and enjoy one another while being from completely different parts of the world. Trying to learn the language was also a fun challenge I gave myself when I would interact with the locals.



Me with new friends from Akumadan.



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